

A Preliminary Study on the High School English Listening and Speaking Blended Teaching Model Based on Production-Oriented Approach

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Abstract

“Production-Oriented Approach (POA)” is a Chinese indigenized theory of language acquisition. The rapidly expanding new media in the current era has demonstrated adequate possibilities for blended teaching concepts. To probe further into the application of POA in high school English listening and speaking classes, this current research uses the research synthesis method to find out the fitting points of POA theory and Blended Teaching theory by reviewing the development of these two theories of both domestic and overseas, which in turn designs a blended teaching model of English listening and speaking for high school students.

Keywords

Production-Oriented Approach; Blended Teaching; Listening and Speaking class; High School English.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

Rivers, as a distinguished American language educators, focused on investigating and recording the proportions of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in people’s general communication.

The statistical results reveal that listening and speaking totally accounts for about 75%, which can clearly demonstrate that people’s ability of listening and speaking in their element plays an increasingly crucial part in daily communication. Listening and speaking class is a common course type in English teaching process of high school and there are sections for listening and speaking training in different English textbook versions such as FLTRP, PEP, Yilin Press and so on. However, most of the traditional listening and speaking teaching methods in high school are based on the behaviorist theory of Bloomfield. This teaching method involves endless listening and repetition, the teaching design is out of practice, and the teaching resources are single, which mainly from post-class exercises. This teaching present condition has led to the emergence of the teaching phenomenon of “emphasis on listening and neglect on speaking” in English classes, which leads to the problem of “separation of learning and using”, eventually lead to a lower learning efficiency [1].

The teaching concepts of Production-Oriented Approach includes the following three parts: Learning-centered principle(LCP), Learning-using integration principle (LUIP), and Whole-person education principle (WPEP). It stands for replacing the the predetermined teaching sequence of “input-output” with “out-driven and input-enabled” [2]. Blended teaching is a product of the “Internet plus” era, it emphasizes the inclusion of computers and mobile phones

in the means of supporting language learning to expand learning resources and structure a new teaching platform.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

The current study links POA theory with blended teaching, which integrates the best qualities of online and offline English teaching, and provides meaningful production tasks in real communicative scenarios by using blended learning. At the same time, this research actively improve classroom teaching design based on Production-Oriented Approach so that teachers can use the authentic feedback, diversified tasks and comprehensive evaluation methods to improve students’ initiative in active learning and teaching efficiency. It assists students fostering their conflict-handling skills, comprehensive language ability and critical thinking while improving their listening and speaking performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Description and Explanation of POA

In allusion to the new curriculum reform of English majors, Wen (2008) first brought forward the “Output-driven hypothesis” on basis of the concept of “Output hypothesis” [3]. Then, Wen (2013) applied this hypothesis to the college English teaching process to achieve the “integration of learning and using”. In 2014, this hypothesis was officially amended as the “Output-driven and Input-enabled” hypothesis and was formally denominated as the “Output-Oriented Approach” [4]. (See Figure 1)

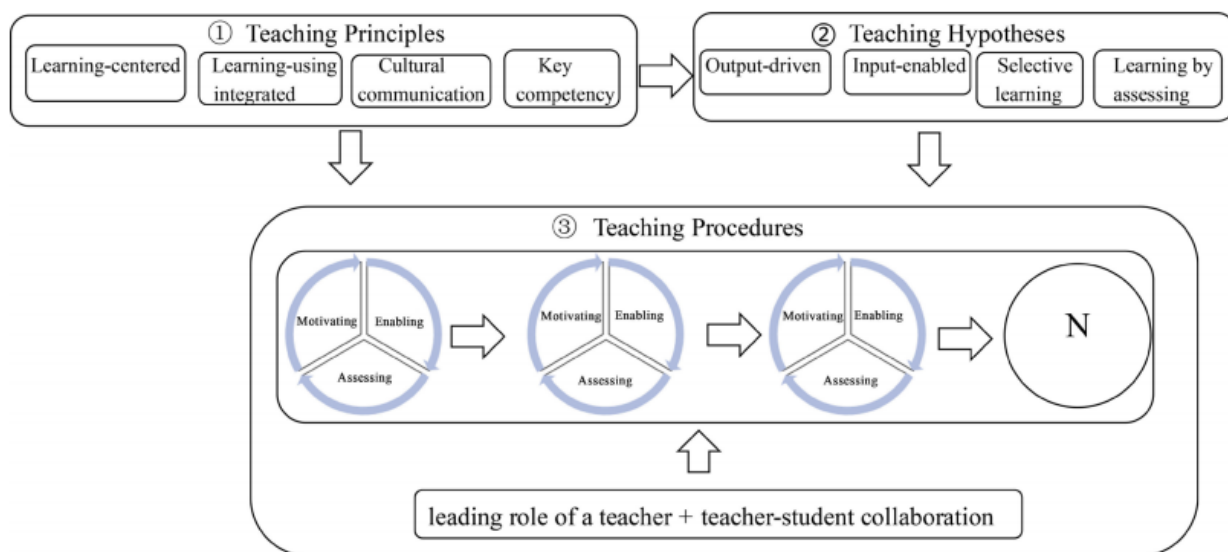


Figure 1. Re-Revised POA (Wen, 2015)

Under the circumstances of analyzing the current situation of English teaching in China, Wen adheres to the three teaching concepts of “Learning-centered principle”, “Learning-using integrated principle” and “Whole-person education principle”. She advocates that teaching must give top priority to achieve the teaching aims and provide materials and organizational forms through topic-driven production tasks to achieve the harmonious between English humanism and instrument function [5].

POA incorporates 4 teaching hypotheses [2]. (1) The “Output-driven hypothesis” stands for some point of view that production is the extraordinary driving power of language learning with exception of the ultimate objective of language teaching. (2) The “Input-enabled hypothesis”

proposes that under output-driven conditions, teachers can play the part of “expert-led” to furnish appropriate inputs which can push forward students’ output in a timely manner, expand their currently existing knowledge as well as their language system. (3) The “selective learning hypothesis” believes that selective learning can optimize teaching efficiency better than non-selective learning. (4) The “Learning by assessing hypothesis” considers that evaluation is a key node for students to strengthen and sublimate their learning skills.

The teaching procedure of POA covers 3 different stages: Motivating, Enabling and Assessing [1]. The teaching procedure consists of the production aims realized by the overall large loop which comprises numerous small loops, to realize the teaching hypothesis. In the entire teaching procedure, teachers give students full initiative and autonomy, but they must also fully act as the leader simultaneously, playing a role of “scaffolding” to guide students in deep learning.

By reading the existing literature, it can be found that the research and practice of POA theory in China are mostly carried out in universities, technical colleges and other general higher education institutions, and they are only preliminary attempts. At the same time, research subjects are mainly concentrated in the fields of language and education. There are a small amount of associated researches in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and small languages, and other subjects are on rare occasions involved. The research content mainly focuses on the theoretical system, teaching practice and effects, and the use and adaptation of teaching materials. Among them, the research on the application mode of POA has an absolute advantage. The research on the theoretical system is far behind the continuously updated teaching practice, which highlights the huge gap between the theory and practice. Since POA was promoted in 2015, relevant scholars have successively carried out teaching experiments to test the teaching effect of POA; combining new educational technologies and teaching models such as micro-classes and flipped classrooms to carry out POA teaching attempts has also become a major trend in current teaching reforms; at the same time, Wen, Q. F.’s team constructed a theory of the use and evaluation of teaching materials based on POA and some scholars tried to adapt teaching materials in other languages based on POA.

2.2. Blended Learning

Blended teaching is a new teaching model that integrates the merits of traditional face-to-face instructions and online teaching [6]. Blended teaching has existed for more than 20 years, from the early application of information technology as the center, to later focusing on strategies and methods, to the current “Internet plus” era that emphasizes students’ experience and participation, its concept and characteristics, teaching purpose, design and implementation, and evaluation criteria have all changed. With the high-speed development of information technology and modern civilization, the concept of blended teaching has been amplified and enriched as “an education teaching scene based on the combination of mobile teaching equipment, online learning environment and classroom discussion” [7]. Through the research of the now existing documents, it can be clearly found that the internal and foreign research on blended teaching mainly revolves around “two aspects”, “three dimensions” and “four links”. The “two aspects” refer to the theoretical and application aspects, the “three dimensions” refer to the preparation, implementation, and feedback of blended teaching, and the “four links” refer to the programming, development, fulfillment, and evaluation of blended teaching. On the whole, theoretical research lags behind practical research, with more research on “implementation” and “effect” than on “preparation”; more research on higher education and vocational education, and less research on elementary and secondary education. There are more studies on specific courses, but less on methodology. Based on the above analysis, it can be found that blended teaching has gradually shifted from focusing on information technology to concentrating on the development of teachers and students and improving teaching effects in the past 20 years.

2.3. Research Questions

This research aims to analyze the present circumstance of high school English listening and speaking teaching and expounds the main content of the POA and focuses attention on the applied value of POA in high school English blended teaching. At the same time, this research starts with three links of POA to stimulate interest in listening and speaking before class, promote cooperative learning and cultivate listening and speaking skills in class, and strengthen consolidating exercises after class.

This research attempts to answer the following three questions:

RQ1: What's the current status of high school English listening and speaking teaching?

RQ2: How to construct the high school English listening and speaking blended teaching model based on POA?

RQ3: Taking specific unit as an example, what kind of teaching design is presented in the high school English listening and speaking blended class under the guidance of POA?

3. CURRENT STATUS OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING TEACHING

3.1. Part of Teachers Ignore English listening and Speaking teaching

Nowadays, despite the initiative of the implementation of quality education for students and comprehensively improving their essential language skills which proposed by the education department, high school students are facing a turning point in the fate of the "college entrance examination", therefore, a high enrollment rate has always been the ultimate goal of the school. Owing to the present examination-focused system, teachers are obliged to place emphasis on the types of exercise involved in the college entrance examination instead of paying attention to develop students' listening and speaking technical abilities, even seldom use certain classes to develop their abilities. Furthermore, some English teachers' teaching mode is not scientific at all. The General Senior High School English Curriculum Standard (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision)[8] continues to be advocated the continuous innovation and adaptation of English teaching materials, but some teachers' traditional teaching models still remain the same: listening to the tape and checking the answers. They only pay attention to the pure explanation of exam key points but ignore the communicative function of language, which makes students unable to truly participate in listening and speaking, but just blindly concentrate on whether the answer is correct, so it turns out to be really difficult to actually improve their listening and speaking abilities.

3.2. Most of Students Have a Poor Performance in Listening and Speaking

The main focus of students' English learning is on lexical and grammatical knowledge in order to cope with exams, so teachers do not pay much attention to students' active production [9]. Secondly, students in most parts of our country receive a late English enlightenment and their English listening and speaking foundation is weak, which has caused the difficulties for them to primitively grasp plenty of advanced vocabulary and grammar. Furthermore, because of students' high level of English anxiety, they usually put too much vigor on the details of whether they use vocabulary and grammar correctly and not confident in their own pronunciation. This vicious circle process gradually leads to a serious lack of motivation for students to learn, and they cannot effectively conduct listening and speaking training, let alone independent learning.

3.3. Lack of High-quality Language Application Environment in High School

The construction of a learning environment is a basic condition for language learning, but enduring test-oriented education has forced students to form a state of "dumb English" [9].

English as a language subject should be used as a tool for communication, but this function has not been really exerted in high school English learning. In addition, students lack opportunities to interact with all walks of life during high school, and the materials in their minds are relatively scarce. Although some students have a strong willingness to communicate with others or express their opinions, normal communication will also be restricted by limited materials and capabilities.

3.4. The Teaching Evaluation Subject and the Evaluation Form are Limited

The teaching philosophy gradually evolved into “learner-centered” in the new reform of curriculum, which expands the role of students as autonomous learners. Teachers hand over the main topics to students, provide them with more appropriate occasions to practice and encourage them to engage in class discussions, by which to a certain extent improves their independent learning capability. However, under this circumstance, students can not receive immediate and effective evaluation after completing the task. Teachers have not played the due role of “scaffolding” to help students make more progress in “zone of proximal development”. In addition, the evaluation indicators and forms are relatively simple. Although some schools’ interactive online learning has played a certain role in evaluation, it cannot accurately evaluate and monitor the process of students’ autonomous learning, and it does not substantially help students improve their learning ability and skills.

4. CONSTRUCTION OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING BLENDED TEACHING MODEL BASED ON POA

In order to build a superior curriculum which is “innovative, advanced, and challenging” under the circumstances of educational informationization, the author proposes the high school English listening and speaking blended teaching model based on POA combined with the difficulties and challenges faced by high school English listening and speaking classes, the certain teaching procedure is presented as follows: (See Figure 2)

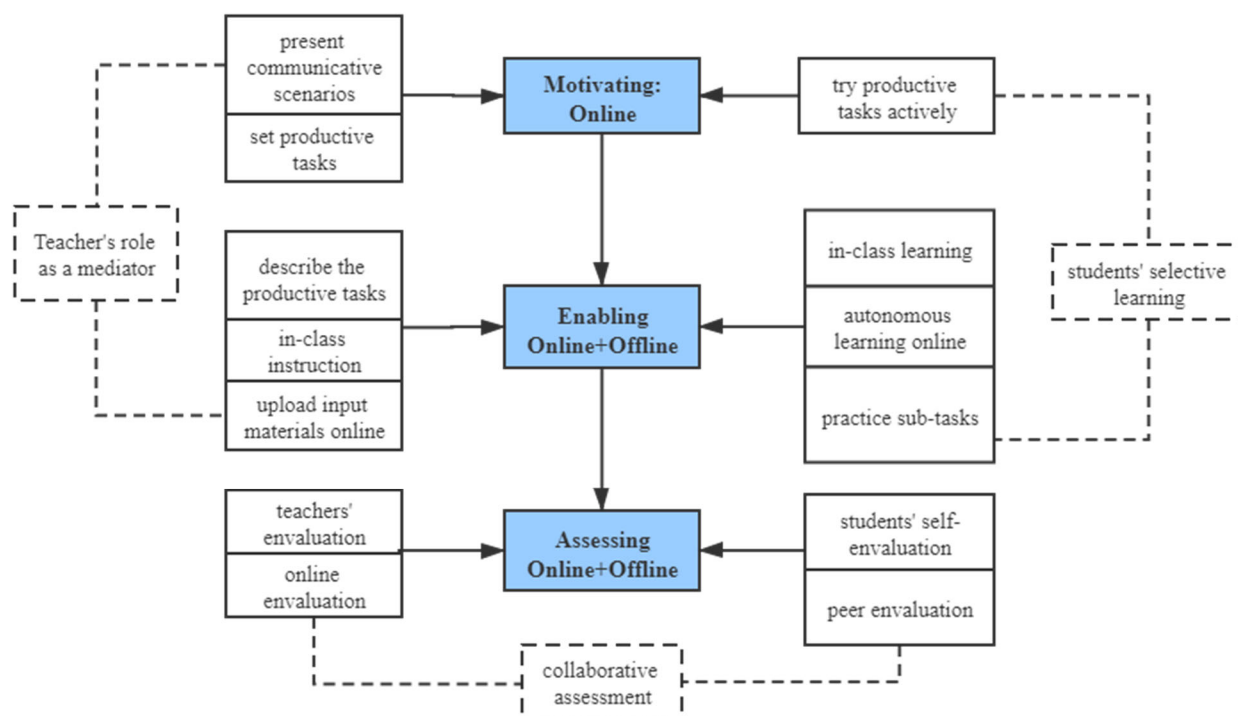


Figure 2. Teaching Procedure of POA

4.1. Motivating: Use Mobile Learning Devices to Share Online High-quality Resources before Class to Stimulate Interest in Listening and Speaking

In the lesson preparation stage, teachers should clarify the theme and goals of this lesson, and design corresponding scenarios and prepare teaching materials that students are interested in based on the theme, and think about output tasks that meet the students' true level [5].

First, construct the communication scene and assign tasks. Teachers can use online platforms such as MOOC and WeChat to publish the learning tasks of this unit, and use video, audio, micro-classes and other methods to guide students to learn independently, create a real communication environment for students, and enhance students' sense of authenticity in this way. It should be noted that the tasks assigned by teachers should be gradually increased from easy to difficult, so as to activate the students' prior knowledge, but also mobilize their enthusiasm and guide them to in-depth exploration.

Second, teachers select productive materials in a targeted manner. After clarifying the teaching objectives of this lesson, teachers should upload appropriate productive materials on the online teaching platform in advance for the output task, such as micro-classes, theme videos or PPT related to this unit, guide students to study independently and complete corresponding topical preparatory homework. The selection of productive materials is based on the students' existing cognitive background and then adds a certain degree of difficulty, which is in line with Krashen's "i+1" input hypothesis [10].

4.2. Enabling: Use Blended Teaching Methods during Class to Promote Cooperative Learning and Cultivate Listening and Speaking Skills

In order to check the online self-learning situation of students before class, teachers conduct tests on students through group discussions or random tests. Subsequently, the teacher will analyze and explain the difficult problems of the students and the important and difficult points of this unit based on the pre-class summary, and interact with the students to exchange their understanding of the knowledge points [5].

In the previous preparation process, students have clarified their weaknesses, so under the guidance of teachers, students choose effective productive materials and key knowledge of this lesson, such as key words, phrases, basic structure, etc. In the process of group discussion, teachers are supposed to provide students an exactitude leading and encourage them to accurately express their unique views.

Finally, each group conducts a classroom presentation, instructs the groups to observe and learn from each other and evaluate the performance of the group. Then the teacher summarizes the students' display and evaluation situation and makes an instant evaluation, pointing out the students' worthy of learning and the need for improvement.

4.3. Assessing: Strengthen Consolidating Exercises after Class and Build a Multiple Evaluation System

Teachers set up after-school consolidation exercises according to the teaching aims and students' different competence. At the same time, teachers can assign review and transfer tasks according to the key and difficult points of this lesson, such as topic debates or writing, to help students consolidate and strengthen their grasp of knowledge. After completing the task, the teacher should make a delayed evaluation of the authenticity and effectiveness of the students' performance. If the teacher blindly asks the student to produce without corresponding feedback, it will easily discourage the students' enthusiasm and reduce the desire to express [5].

Students' final comprehensive results are spanided into two pieces. The first piece is the completion of homework and oral output of online and offline, which accounting for 50%; the

second piece is the achievement of the final exam, which accounting for 50%. Increasing the proportion of the first part can increase students' emphasis and motivation on listening and speaking module.

5. TEACHING DESIGN OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH LISTENING AND SPEAKING BLENDED TEACHING BASED ON POA

The current research take Module5 Unit1 《The Monarch's Journey》 of FLTRP for example to discuss the high school English listening and speaking blended teaching model based on POA. The subject context of this unit is the relationship between the humanity and nature-natural ecology and environmental protection. The text type is an explanatory text about the migration of the Monarch. Teaching design is centered in keeping with the three links of "pre-class online motivating", "in-class blended enabling" and "post-class blended assessing" [6].

5.1. Teaching Aims

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- (1) Obtain, sort out, and describe factual information about the animal migration (the definition, type, reasons for migration; migratory animals and their migration paths);
- (2) Organize, summarize and report on the background, purposes, ways and reasons of the Monarch migration;
- (3) Clarify the impact of human behavior on animal survival through the group cooperation, peer discussion, personal thinking, etc. Critically think about the topic of "people-oriented or nature-oriented in ecological environment protection" in the class, so as to enhance their consciousness of "the harmony between man and nature".

5.2. Teaching Procedures

The certain teaching design of this unit is presented as follows: (See Table 1)

5.2.1 Motivating

According to the theoretical system of POA, the main task of the motivating link is to make students realize their own shortcomings by allowing students to try to produce actively, in order to mobilize their learning fervour and generate learning desire. This link includes 3 steps:

- (1) The teacher presents a communicative scene.

The communication scene designed in this unit is: suppose you represent the school as a volunteer interpreter for the National Zoological Museum, and you need to introduce animal science knowledge such as species history, morphological characteristics and living habits to foreign friends in English. British tourist Eva is particularly interested in the famous monarch butterfly in America, and she would like you to explain its spectacular long-distance annual migration.

- (2) Try to produce actively.

Teachers should upload an introduction video or PPT of animal migration as well as the key words and phrases in this unit, through the MOOC or WeChat platform one week in advance. The students tried to produce actively according to the above scene, but due to the lack of relevant knowledge and language skills, they realized that it is no easy matter to explain the life habits, migration paths and reasons of monarch butterflies in English, which makes them being in the "sense of hunger" of learning, thereby stimulating students' learning motivation.

Table 1. Teaching Design Based on POA

Procedure	Step	Teaching Content	
Motivating: Online	Presentation of the communicative scene	If foreign friends visit the National Zoological Museum, students, as volunteer interpreters in the venue, need to use English to introduce animal species history, morphological characteristics, living habits and other animal science knowledge. The British tourist Eva is particularly interested in the famous monarch butterfly in America, and would like to ask students to explain their long-distance annual migration process	
	Production attempts	The students realize that their own language storage is insufficient and have a “sense of hunger” to stimulate a strong desire for knowledge, and submit their oral works to the WeChat platform	
	Explanation of the teaching aims and production tasks	<p>Communication aims: Students should be able to understand the definition of migration; summarize, and report on the background, purpose, method and reasons of the migration of monarch butterflies, and enhance their consciousness of “the harmony between man and nature”.</p> <p>Language aims: Students should be able to perceive the ideographic function of speech in a meaningful context, use speech knowledge appropriately to achieve effective communication purposes, and at the same time master the vocabulary, phrases and grammar needed to complete the expression, and understand accurately in a specific context.</p> <p>Production tasks: Make a presentation about the migration process of monarch butterflies in about 3 minutes; organize an English debate on the topic of “people-oriented or nature-oriented in ecological environment protection”</p>	
Enabling: Blended (online+offline)	Content	Target content	Clarify the definition of migration, summarize and report on the background, purposes, ways and reasons of the Monarch migration
		Enabling method	Audio and video input, material reading, topic discussion, information summary
	Language form	Target language	Key words and phrases presented in audio, video and materials
		Enabling method	Re-watching and listening to the audio and video, text reading, teachers’ explanation
	Discourse structure	Target structure	DEDUCT ION AND SUMMARY
		Enabling method	Essay demonstration, structure extraction, imitation learning
Assessing: Blended (online+offline)	Collaborative assessment	Pre-class	The teacher selects the focus of evaluation and reviews typical samples of the pre-class oral presentation
		In-class	Independent thinking—group discussion—teacher participation evaluation
		Post-class	Students improve their oral output, share them on the WeChat platform, and exchange assessments between teachers and students

(3) Teachers explain teaching aims and production tasks.

Teaching aims are divided into communication aims and language aims: The former refers that students should be able to understand the definition of migration; they can summarize and

report on the background, purpose, method and reasons of the migration of monarch butterflies, and enhance their consciousness of “the harmony between man and nature”. The latter one refers that students should be able to perceive the ideographic function of speech in a meaningful context, use speech knowledge appropriately to achieve effective communication purposes, and at the same time master the vocabulary, phrases and grammar needed to complete the expression, and understand accurately in a specific context.

Production tasks are divided into two types: in-class tasks and extracurricular tasks. In-class tasks refer to output exercises that are synchronized with productive learning; extracurricular tasks refer to the output exercises that teachers require students to complete after class. They are divided into review tasks and transitional tasks. The review task of this unit is to require students to make a presentation about the migration process of monarch butterflies in about 3 minutes; the transitional tasks refer to allowing students to think critically and debate in English about the topic of “people-oriented or nature-oriented in ecological environment protection”.

5.2.2 Enabling

The principle task of the enabling phase is to furnish a support for students to carry through the output task in a targeted pattern. This is the most critical and challenging stage in POA, which can be refined into the following steps:

(1) The teachers describe the productive tasks. The output task can be decomposed into two sub-tasks to decrease the difficulty and reduce the disparity between the output task and the productive learning: the first one is to report the background, purpose, method and reason of the migration of monarch butterflies; the second is to propose specific measures for for bettering the harmonious transaction between man and nature. If there is still difficulty, teachers can further break down the sub-tasks. For example, sub-task 2 can be broken down into the following questions: Do you pay attention to protecting and cherishing the ecological environment in your daily life? Which phenomena show that the worldwide ecological and environmental problems are becoming increasingly serious? What caused the environment deterioration? As a high school student in the new era, what measures do you think can be taken to improve the ecological environment?

(2) Students carry on selective learning, and teachers supply guidance and examinations. Teachers provide students with multi-model productive materials according to the above sub-tasks. It mainly includes BBC and CNN related video materials about animal migration and ecological environment deterioration, and text materials motivated by questions and exercises. According to the principle of selective learning, teachers should make sure that the learning content are emphasized respectively and differently. In the first place, teachers should guide students to focus on the views and content required for the productive tasks. Second, teachers instruct students to highly centralize their attention on absorbing the language expressions which is necessary for active production. Third, guide students to extract the discourse and text structure needed for the output task from the production. In the process of guidance, teachers should give regular inspection about the suitability of students' knowledge selection promptly.

(3) Students make the production practice, and teachers give them guidance and checks. The production tasks can be carried out by means of listening assignments, oral retelling, short essay filling in the blank text structure, etc. All of the progressive production exercises need to be carried out under the guidance of teachers, and the teachers needs to assess immediately after students' production.

5.2.3 Assessing

The production assessment system includes both instant assessment and delayed assessment. This unit mainly uses Teacher-Student Cooperative Assessment (TSCA) to evaluate the oral production results submitted by students. The detailed steps are as follows:

To achieve the teaching objective of “stimulating learning with assessment”, in the pre-class and in-class stages, teachers should firstly explain the assessing aims, requirements and steps to the students. Students conduct an independent evaluation according to the online task completion, mastery of key words and sentence patterns, comprehension of listening materials, classroom performance in the student-oriented teaching assessment. Finally, the teacher gives the comments and revisions aiming at the pre-tasks before class, allowing students to discuss and compare the resemblances and discrepancy between the teacher and student revision suggestions and the reasons.

In the after-class assessment stage, students should conduct self-evaluation or peer evaluation of the work submitted according to the revised mode discussed in class. In this process, students can solidify and internalize the knowledge they have learned, and teachers will conduct general surveys or partial random checks on students’ evaluation results in a planned way to understand students’ evaluations. Teachers and students communicated and summarized through the WeChat platform, and selected 5 excellent works for students to use for reference.

6. EPILOGUE

In the domain of language acquisition, there is a great appropriateness between the POA theory and the blended teaching model. From a theoretical point of view, the integration of POA and blended teaching aims to improve students’ listening skills and promote their oral production, which broadens learning approaches and extends the breadth and depth of learning. It constructs efficient English courses with diversified teaching forms, multi-dimensional teaching evaluation and multi-faceted teaching methods with the assistance of the information technology. From a practical point of view, the English blended teaching model based on POA as a new teaching model in the information age, can effectively overcome some inherent drawbacks of “separation of learning and use” in high school traditional listening and speaking courses, and integrate input and production closely. It can considerably improve the students’ learning efficiency which directly transform the learned knowledge into application ability driven by the production. Therefore, in the era of rapid development of modern information, high school teachers can create a new type of blended English teaching model according to the formation of institutions of their own schools’ learning characteristics and unique teaching features of POA, to help high school students get out of the input and output difficulties, improve their English application ability, and cultivate the versatile and practical talents suitable for social development.

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